

REVIEW

Géza G. Xeravits, József Zsengellér (eds), *The Books of the Maccabees. History, Theology, Ideology. Papers of the Second International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pápa, Hungary, 9–11 June, 2005 (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 118), Brill: Leiden – Boston 2007, 245 pp.; ISBN 10: 90 04 15700 X; ISBN 13: 978 90 04 157000 2; ISSN 1383-2161.

After a period of heightened interest in the Books of the Maccabees, especially Books 1 and 2, the past few years show a stagnation in research on them as no major synthesis has appeared over this time. This opinion is not contradicted by the great number of studies attempting to interpret a variety of respective detailed problems involved in both texts. For this reason, the initiative to devote to the both books a conference in the cycle devoted to the Deuterocanonical Books organized the Shime'on Centre for the Study of Hellenistic and Roman Age Judaism and Christianity of the Reformed Theological Academy of Pápa deserves note.

The conference proceedings contain 15 contributions which the editors divided into several thematic groups. The introductory paper is an article by G. Dorival (*Has the Category of 'Deuterocanonical Books' a Jewish Origin?* pp. 1–10). The author discusses the origin of the term “Deuterocanonical Books,” the canon of texts they include, and their treatment by early Christian writers.

Historical aspects are addressed in the contributions of J. Kampen (*The Books of the Maccabees and Sectarianism in Second Temple Judaism*, pp. 11–30) and J. Pastor (*The Famine in 1 Maccabees: History or Apology?*, pp. 31–43). Articles grouped as historical and theological include contributions of K. Berthelott, *The Biblical Conquest of the Promised Land and the Hasmonean Wars According to 1 and 2 Maccabees* (pp. 45–60); T. Hieke, *The Role of 'Scripture' in the Last Words of Mattathias (1 Macc 2: 49–70)*, (pp. 61–74); F. V. Reiterer, *Die Vergangenheit als Basis für die Zukunft Mattathias' Lehre für seine Söhne aus der Geschichte in 1 Makk 2: 52–60* (pp. 75–100); T. Nicklas, *Irony in 2 Maccabees?* (pp. 101–111). The largest category consists of articles on theology and ideology: M.-F. Baslez, *The Origin of the Martyrdom Images: from the Book of Maccabees to the First Christians* (pp. 113–130); J. Bolyki, *'As soon as the Signal was given' (2 Macc 4: 14): Gymnasia in the Service of Hellenism* (pp. 131–139); B. Ego, *God's Justice. The 'Measure for Measure' Principle in 2 Maccabees* (pp. 141–154); A. Lange, *2 Maccabees 2: 13–15: Library or Canon?*

(pp. 155–167); S. Storch, *The Libraries in 2 Macc 2: 13–15, and the Torah as a Public Document in Second Century BC Judaism* (pp. 169–180); J. Zsengellér, *Maccabees and Temple Propaganda* (pp. 181–195). Although the last two do not directly refer either to the First or Second Book of the Maccabees, their presence in the volume is justified by their focus on the historical period when the books were composed: M. Weigold (*The Deluge and the Flood of Emotions: The Use of Flood Imagery in 4 Maccabees in Its Ancient Jewish Context*, pp. 197–210) addresses the literary function of the Deluge motive in 4 Macc, while G. G. Xeravitis (*From the Forefathers to the 'Angry Lion': Qumran and the Hasmoneans*, pp. 211–221) deals with criticism of the Hasmoneans found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The editors' thematic subdivision must be seen as pure formality since whatever the focus respective contributions have chosen: ideology, theology, or history, their authors necessarily stay within the orb of history. For this and other reasons, the publication should be recommended first to researchers of the Hasmonean period, even if in the process they have to wade through many pages of theological or literary reflections. Tedious though such meditations may sometimes seem to historians, they still offer a deeper insight into some events described in 1 or 2 Maccabees and involving the Hasmonean struggles against Hellenization of Judea's culture and religion. Several contributions address the propaganda aspects of both Scriptural books. More attention in these discussions is garnered by 1 Macc, which is only natural, given the presumed purpose the book was written to serve in the first place. It offers a version of events meant to help create a favorable picture of the Hasmonean family as heroes in the struggle for Judea's religious freedom and independence. The contributions provide evidence to confirm the propaganda purpose behind 1 Macc and offer additional arguments to support the hypothesis. A few articles contain reflection on various aspects of the political involvement of the Hasmoneans. They contradict the popular view about it being under the pervasive influence of Biblical tradition. The prevailing view has been questioned by recent findings which have revised the dating of those apocryphal and pseudepigraphic texts on which it was based.

In my belief, the Pápa conference proceedings deserve a lasting place in bibliographies of not only both Maccabean Books, but also the uprising of the Maccabees. This belief is in no way shaken by a feeling of certain insufficiency after reading the book. After all, publications of conference materials do not always contain answers to our burning questions about its subject.

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